



M E D I A R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE
BUREAU OF TENNCARE

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U.S. OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL RECOGNIZES TENNCARE FOR HEALTHCARE TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

SHARED HEALTH PROGRAM OFFERS ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD TO PROVIDERS

NASHVILLE – In a report released today, the U.S. Office of Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services found that the Bureau of TennCare is among the few state Medicaid agencies implementing electronic health initiatives.

Out of the 52 agencies surveyed, TennCare was one of only 12 found to be using innovative health information technology in its day-to-day operations. TennCare also was one of only five such state agencies that have developed e-prescribing initiatives for their providers.

“We appreciate the OIG’s recognition of TennCare’s efforts to put technological innovation and structures to work here in Tennessee,” said TennCare Director Darin Gordon. “The benefits to our enrollees – cutting down on errors and inefficiency, among others – are clear. And these efforts go a long way toward Governor Phil Bredesen’s vision for using technology to improve the healthcare system overall.”

TennCare, in partnership with Shared Health, has implemented a claims-based electronic health record (EHR) that contains diagnoses, procedure or visit information, and prescription histories. It contains non-claims information from other sources, such as lab results from participating labs and immunization records provided by the State public health department. The TennCare EHR also allows providers to maintain other pertinent information such as vital signs, allergies or documentation of early periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment screenings.

TennCare also offers e-prescribing to its providers through the secure TennCare EHR web portal. The e-prescribing application includes information about TennCare’s drug formulary, dosing instructions and side effects, as well as a tool to alert providers about potential drug interactions based on a patient’s prescription history or allergies. “We have received very positive feedback from our providers,” Gordon said, “who report that the information in our electronic health record helps them make better decisions about their patients’ care. They have more complete information at their fingertips and are able to better plan and coordinate their patients’ treatment.”

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Such health information technology and health information exchange initiatives have been identified by the Governor and federal officials as having the potential to reduce healthcare costs that arise from inefficiency, medical errors, inappropriate care and incomplete information. In order to plan for and coordinate the initiatives across the state, the Governor established the Tennessee eHealth Advisory Council. The Council is a public-private partnership that guides ongoing eHealth initiatives in Tennessee to ensure interoperability, facilitate the definition of uniform standards, eliminate duplication of effort and reduce competition for resources. TennCare participates extensively in the Council and in statewide eHealth assessment and planning activities.

Shared Health EHR has been in operation for more than two years, beginning as a pilot. Through the course of surveying state Medicaid directors and interviewing officials with the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the OIG documented the progress made by TennCare in implementing statewide health information technology plans. The final report can be viewed at <http://www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-02-06-00270.pdf>.

TennCare is Tennessee's managed-care Medicaid program serving approximately 1.2 million low-income children, pregnant women and disabled Tennesseans, with an annual budget of \$7 billion.

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